CLM John Robson
SE Editorial
HD **Wanted: A real Green party with a real Green philosophy**
BY John Robson
CR Ottawa Citizen
WC 771 words
PD 6 September 2006
SN Vancouver Sun
SC VNCS
ED FINAL C
PG A13
LA English
CY Copyright © 2006 Vancouver Sun

LP

It wasn't really my preference to see Elizabeth May defeat David Chernushenko for the leadership of the Green party.

I'm not sure she has the right stuff. But as a deepish ecologist, I hope my fears prove unfounded.

TD

I mean it. I've dined out on one-upping David Suzuki, when he confessed to having a TV at his cottage, by haughtily saying that ours has no electricity. To me, the saddest scene in the Lord of the Rings is when the hobbits return to the Shire and find the trees cut down, the river polluted and factories spewing filth. I could vote for a real Green party with a real Green philosophy.

That means a radically different "small-is-beautiful" way of looking at the world. It has more in common with free-market economics than most supporters of either like to think about. For instance, in principle neither likes huge impersonal systems that treat society like a machine and humans like cogs. But then, both should loathe central planning.

My fear for Canada's Green party is perfectly encapsulated in the jibe about "watermelons," green outside and red inside. Too often concern for the environment is simply a cover for wanting control, an orc-like impulse to seize, regiment and crush. Too many Greens are green because they hate people, not because they love nature.

Let me give three ugly examples. First, foreign policy. Can one rationally doubt that the Green party will favour the enemies of the West? During the Cold War, environmentalists made a huge fuss, not unreasonably, about the environment in their own societies.

But they tended to link capitalism and "bourgeois" democracy to ecological catastrophe while Marxism turned the Soviet Union into a toxic waste dump 12 time zones wide. China today is an environmental disaster. Saddam Hussein drained Iraq's vast ancient marshes.

A rational Green party should embrace freedom because man loves nature, but those who would dominate and stomp on man do not.

 © 2025 Factiva, Inc. All rights reserved.

Next, socialized medicine. Can one rationally doubt that the Green party supports it? But it's a vast, impersonal engine, processing human units, treating diseases not patients, denying doctors the time, resources or institutional freedom to know those in their care as complete, real individuals. If small is beautiful, the Canada Health Act is hideous.

Finally, abortion. Can one rationally doubt that the Green party will be staunchly pro-choice and pro-contraception? Yet the first is technologically violent and the second fills a woman's body with chemicals to disrupt her natural cycles so a man can take his pleasure of her at will. What sort of Earth Mother Goddess favours scalpels, swingers and sterility?

I'd love to be wrong here. A pro-nature party that was also pro-life might shake up politics in a truly interesting way. One that grinds its teeth and snarls about patriarchy will just annoy from the fringes. Which would be bad for everybody.

We still have major environmental problems, like light pollution. At our cottage, nine kilometres from the nearest road, you still brush your teeth by candlelight and see the Milky Way. But lately the southern night sky has been invaded by man-made light, chasing away the stars. For this and many other reasons including cancerous urban sprawl, cities must be made more humane. But we need remedies, not nagging.

And while I'm a skeptic on the greenhouse effect, especially since now it apparently causes glaciers to grow as well as shrink, those who believe in it should seek practical responses. A real Green philosophy would understand that in markets, as in ecosystems, available resources draw creatures into niches and require them to adapt. It would insist on full-cost pricing of all resources, not drivel about commodification.

I have met Elizabeth May and found her not immune to the temptations of sanctimony. I do not know whether she can perform effectively in politics, supplanting the sterile NDP on the left and forcing Liberals and Conservatives to think more philosophically and more nobly about policy. But I hope so.

A revitalized, philosophical Green party would contribute more than just environmental sanity. It would help combat the overarching modern tendency to treat humans as bits of a machine. And it would force other parties to sharpen their thinking instead of their tongues. Slapping a coat of pale green paint on the rusting hulk of big-government, mechanistic socialism will provide no such benefits.

I can't vote for that.

NS nedi : Editorial | ncat : Content Types

RE cabc : British Columbia | cana : Canada | namz : North America

IPD Column

PUB Vancouver Sun

AN Document VNCS000020060906e2960000z

 © 2025 Factiva, Inc. All rights reserved.